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UNCLAS NASSAU 01455

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NASSAU 001455

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR WHAT/CAR A. NORMAN, M. FORTIN; PRM J. YUTACOM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [SMIG](#) [BF](#)

SUBJECT: BAHAMAS REACTS POSITIVELY, SEEKS MORE INFO ON  
DEPORTEE REINTEGRATION PILOT PROJECT

REF: A. STATE 144201  
[1](#)B. STATE 153189

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Bahamian officials reacted positively to initial briefings on the IOM Deportee Reintegration Pilot Project, but seek further details regarding its timing, progress and scope. They would also welcome clarification of the distinction between governmental and non-governmental involvement. Officials initially made no reference to participation of other CARICOM states nor raised objections to the pursuit of bilateral solutions. Prospects of success are good given past cooperation with IOM, relatively high economic development, low number of deportees, and expressed desire by law enforcement officials for better tracking of criminal deportees upon arrival. Coordination among government agencies may be the biggest challenge. Post will work closely with IOM and GCOB interlocutors to ensure start-up goes smoothly, and seek to leverage association with the project to improve cooperation in other areas of migration management, which is a major policy issue facing the government. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Following initial working-level contacts at the Ministry of National Security and Immigration (MNS) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on November 6 then Charge briefed the office of the Permanent Secretary in the MNS on the Department's signing of the grant agreement with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to develop and implement a pilot program to assist Jamaica, Guyana and The Bahamas with the reintegration of deportees from the U.S. The Ministry specifically inquired about who from IOM would coordinate the program, when the government might hear from them, and what the division of responsibility between the government and IOM, to say nothing of local NGO actors, might be.

13. (SBU) Working-level briefings by PolOff at the MNS and MFA were greeted with similar expressions of support and requests for further information. PolOff made clear that IOM, as the Department's implementing partner, would be following up with the government directly on specifics. GCOB officials initially made no reference to participation of other CARICOM states nor did they voice objections to the pursuit of bilateral solutions, consistent with the GCOB's low interest in regional action through CARICOM. In follow-up contacts, it emerged that there might be reservations about the current project model in some quarters within the MFA in favor of a regional approach. However, subsequent contacts with the Minister provided assurance that the Bahamas was eager to move forward with the project.

14. (SBU) The IOM Regional Representative for North America and the Caribbean, Dick Scott, informed Post on November 9 that IOM had sent a letter on November 2 to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary Sheila Carey introducing the pilot project and asking for GCOB support in arranging the initial IOM visit. IOM is expected to send a representative to Nassau imminently to consult with the GCOB. Post will work closely with IOM and government interlocutors to ensure that the start-up phase goes as smoothly as possible. During a September 12-13 visit to Nassau, the IOM chief previewed the Deportee Reintegration Pilot Project with Bahamian interlocutors and was advised to coordinate future activities with the Bahamian MFA. PolOff also met with and was briefed by the IOM team on migration issues more broadly and the GCOB's (still undetermined) priorities at that time.

15. (SBU) Prospects for the Deportee Reintegration Pilot Project's success in The Bahamas are good. Aside from the positive official reception, the Bahamas has a track record of good cooperation with IOM, according to both IOM officials and GCOB immigration officials with whom PolOff is in regular contact. The Bahamas' relatively high level of economic development and low levels of unemployment bode particularly well for planned business skills training and job placement activities for returnees, and possibly for small enterprise development. Law enforcement officials have publicly voiced concern about the continued criminal activities of criminal deportees "from North America" and elsewhere upon their return to The Bahamas and the familiar criminal milieu. Consequently, police officials informed Legat that they are seeing a better method of tracking or managing criminal deportees upon return.

16. (SBU) In addition, the GCOB is actively searching for policies to fight increasing crime domestically, among other ways by focusing government and societal efforts on rehabilitation of previous offenders. This initiative corresponds well with that oft-expressed goal. With low numbers of deportees (approximately 75 in 2006, according to IOM), an active NGO sector, and welcoming official climate, The Bahamas ought to be able to successfully re-integrate deportees with IOM's assistance despite any shortcomings in existing government capacity.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: As the MFA is unlikely to play an operational role in setting up the project, coordination among government agencies may be the biggest challenge for the project's successful implementation, certainly in the early going. Post will assist and seek to leverage association with the reintegration project to improve cooperation in other areas of migration management in which IOM has expertise and Post has a stake, including improved anti-fraud procedures and methodologies, anti-trafficking efforts, and respect for human rights of migrants and asylum-seekers.

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